







# THE QUESTION:

*If a man die, shall he live again ? ”*

JOB xiv. 14.

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# THE QUESTION:

*“If a man die, shall he live again?”*

JOB xiv. 14.

A BRIEF HISTORY AND EXAMINATION  
OF MODERN SPIRITUALISM

BY

EDWARD CLODD

WITH A POSTSCRIPT BY

PROFESSOR H. E. ARMSTRONG, F.R.S.

‘Ah, what a dusty answer gets the soul  
When hot for certainties in this our life.”  
*George Meredith.*

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**TO**

**MY VALUED FRIEND**

**PROFESSOR HENRY EDWARD ARMSTRONG**

**PH.D., LL.D., D.Sc., F.R.S.**





## PREFACE

**T**HE subject of this book is not a history of the origin of the belief in immortality, but an examination of the evidence on which those who call themselves Spiritualists base that belief.

It is to be regretted that this general term should have been appropriated by them; Materialists. they should have been named, because they assert that souls are made of highly tenuous matter. But the mischief is done and the self-applied term must remain their monopoly.

Two generations have passed since Spiritualism gained a footing in this country, wherefore it seems well that its origin and early history should have record. Few know that it came of tainted parentage and that it grew up in an atmosphere of fraud, which still clings to it.

My wife has helped me in the tedious work of collecting materials and of revising proofs. The thankless task of proof-reading has also been undertaken by my friend Professor H. E. Armstrong, F.R.S., who further adds to my obligations in accepting the dedication of this book, and, of his own accord, contributing a Postscript.

E. C.

STRAFFORD HOUSE, ALDEBURGH,  
SUFFOLK, *July*, 1917.



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**PART I**  
**INTRODUCTORY**



## INTRODUCTORY

“Yea, they have all one breath.”—*Ecclesiastes* iii. 19.

IN astronomical observations absolute accuracy is impossible, because eyes and other conditions vary in each observer: hence variation in the reports which each brings. To arrive at a sure result, there are made such additions to, or subtractions from, a number of observations of the same celestial object as will compensate for known causes of error. This is called “personal equation,” a term once restricted to science, but now applied generally to denote allowances to be made in respect of opinions due to bias or idiosyncrasy. This equation, arrived at by the astronomer, eliminates error. Mathematically equipped, he issues *The Nautical Almanack*, which, for the guidance of seamen on long voyages, tabulates the exact places of the leading heavenly bodies on each day for a period of four years. The astronomer reckons backwards as easily as forwards: he calculates the date of an eclipse that happened centuries ago, or the year when a comet will return. For the material on which he works is found to be unvarying in its operation.

Not thus is it with the psychologist. He has to deal with a complex and unstable organ—the most



marvellous thing in the world, the human brain : a mass of matter of which more than four-fifths is water, and containing, it is computed, about three thousand million cells whose motor, sensory and association centres are located in its cortex or outer grey rind. It is an apparatus so delicately poised that the wonder is not that it sometimes goes wrong, but that it ever goes right. No certitude can attach to its behaviour ; there is always risk of the abnormal to upset calculations.

Once more to contrast psychology and astronomy. The irregularities in the motion of Uranus set the mathematicians in quest of the position of the disturbing body : the brilliant result was the discovery of the planet Neptune. But what formula can we apply to the irregular activities of the mind ? The normal mind has its fallacies, the abnormal mind has its delusions and illusions, and as if these were not enough to baffle us, there is the strange phenomenon of multiple, dissociated "personality" which the late Mr Myers termed the "subliminal self," literally, "beneath the threshold" (*limen*) of actual or present consciousness. Some have misconstrued this as implying an *alter ego*, whereas what is meant is a cerebral region wherein are stored-up myriads of impressions which have passed unheeded by us into our potential consciousness, and which become active under various, often abnormal, mental states. The most notable example of the "subliminal self" or "selves," since Mr Myers admits the plural form, is that of the neurasthenic "Miss Beauchamp" (an assumed name) with her fourfold states of consciousness : now serious, now

impish; now in open rupture, one against three; one "personality" dressing smartly; one donning Quaker-like garb; and so forth in extraordinary alternations tragico-comic.<sup>1</sup> A further example is that of a man who in September, 1910, was brought on a charge of theft before a London magistrate, who discharged him on the medical evidence that the man was an epileptic and had committed the theft while in a secondary state of consciousness. Perhaps these abnormal workings throw light on the old belief in the demon-possessed, the bewitched, the lycanthropes and allied superstitions.

The theories broached by men of science can be proved or disproved by experiment and observation, and when, after repeated tests, the results anticipated by the theory are found to be unvarying, the theory is established. Every doubting person, given the chance and capacity, can verify these results for himself; as a rule there is acceptance, without challenge, of what collective authority has verified. But in investigating the phenomena of spiritualism no experimental tests are forthcoming; only the experiential, which is a very different thing. In the strict sense of the term, no scientific proof is possible. We have to accept or reject what Spiritualists tell us, and supplement this, so far as we can, by observations made, as will be shown hereafter, under difficulties not attending other branches of research.

To return to the mechanism of the brain. We

<sup>1</sup> *The Dissociation of a Personality: a Biographical Study in Abnormal Psychology.* By Morton Prince, M.D. (1906). See also for a case of double personality Professor Pierre Janet's *Major Symptoms of Hysteria* (1907).

know that all the thoughts that we think and all the emotions that we feel are accompanied by certain chemical changes or molecular vibrations in the nerve-tissues ; changes in the nerve-centres responding to external stimuli. We know that the healthy working of the brain depends on the maintenance of its expended energy by food ; that if a man be starved or stupefied, paralysed or palsied, the elaborate machinery is thrown out of gear. Recent research indicates that a permanence possibly attaches to the nerve-cells which is not shared by the body-cells. Unlike these, the neurons are adapted to last the entire life of the organism of which they form a part ; but, once destroyed, they cannot be replaced.<sup>1</sup> What we further know is our ignorance. Brain and mind are interdependent, but we cannot apply physico-chemical processes to mental processes ; the gulf between the two is, and, seemingly, will remain, impassable. All the reactions and responses of our brains to our surroundings are accompanied by changes in consciousness, but what consciousness is passes the wit of man to discover. Huxley puts it with his never-failing clearness : " If a man says that consciousness cannot exist, except in relation of cause and effect with certain molecules, I must ask how he knows that ; and if he says that it can, I must put the same question." <sup>2</sup> That is the impregnable position of biological science as defined by one of its greatest expositors. " Soul is known to us only in a brain,

<sup>1</sup> " Nature and Nurture in Mental Development." By F. W. Mott, F.R.S. *Science Progress*, October, 1913, p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> *Collected Essays*. Vol. ix., p. 141.

but the special note of soul is that it is capable of existing without a brain, or after death."<sup>1</sup> That is the unverifiable assumption of theology. And when a reviewer of *Raymond* in *Nature*, which may, perhaps, be regarded as the representative scientific journal in this country, says that "Life is not a form of energy," that "it guides and directs energy, but there is no sound reason to believe that it goes out of existence when it ceases to manifest through a particular body,"<sup>2</sup> he expresses only a personal "pious opinion."

In a review of the same book, Sir Conan Doyle, allowing rhetorical eulogy to take the place of sober assessment of a momentous theme, affirms that the record therein is a "new revelation of God's dealings with man which must modify some ill-defined and melancholy dogmas as to the events which follow the death of the body."<sup>3</sup> In what degree the contents of *Raymond* justify this remarkable claim on its behalf to be an inspired supplement to, or supersession of, an old revelation will be more fully considered later on. Does the "new revelation" "modify" dogmas about the soul's destiny, or, changing the terms, only reaffirm them? Will it add a hitherto undreamt-of significance to the words: "Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."<sup>4</sup> We shall see.

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Theories in Philosophy and Religion*, p. 328. By Principal Tulloch.

<sup>2</sup> *Nature*, 14th December 1916.

<sup>3</sup> *Observer*, 25th November 1916.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew xiii. 17.

At the outset of the inquiry, a hearing must be accorded to what the anthropologist has to say on the pedigree of Spiritualism. We shall learn from him that this pedigree stretches into a dim and dateless past, reaching to the animistic stage in the evolution of religion: a stage when men conceived of spirits indwelling in everything, and when, as world-wide evidence shows, largely through the experience of dreams, shadows and reflections of himself and suchlike bewildering phenomena, there dawned upon him the sense of personality—an *alter ego*—something apart from the body. On such a plane are the natives of Australia, who stand at the bottom level of culture. One of the Kurnai tribe told Mr Howitt that his *yambo*, or spirit, could leave the body. "It must be so," he said, "for when I sleep I go to far-away places; I see distinct people, I even see and speak with those who are dead."<sup>1</sup> Hence, in the lower culture, the widespread avoidance of waking a sleeper, because his soul may be absent; and the European folk-custom of not turning a sleeper over lest the absent soul should miss the way back. To the savage dreams are true, not only "while they last," but long afterwards. They link the lowest minds with the highest; the Australian with the great Roman poet Lucretius when he speaks of that which "scares us, when buried in sleep, so that we seem to see and hear face to face those who are dead and gone, whose bones the earth holds in its embrace."<sup>2</sup>

Both savage and spiritualist are one in belief in

<sup>1</sup> *Journal Anthropol. Institute.* Vol. xiii., p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> *De Rerum Natura.* Book I. 133-135.

the survival and return of the soul, and in their vague conception of its nature.

In wellnigh every language, both barbaric and civilised, the word for "spirit" and "breath" is the same. Yahweh (Jehovah) breathed into Adam's "nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul"<sup>1</sup>; and in barbaric belief the soul of the dying man departs through his nostrils. It is by his breath that the medicine-man among the tribes of the north-west Amazons works his cures; "sometimes he will breathe on his own hand and then massage the affected part."<sup>2</sup> The association between breath and spiritual transfer has examples in Jesus breathing upon the disciples when imparting to them the Holy Ghost, and in the conferring of supernatural grace in the rites and ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church. When an ancient Roman lay at the point of death, his nearest relative inhaled the last breath to ensure the continuance of the spirit, while the same reason prompted the act of a dying Lancashire witch, a friend receiving her last breath, and with it, as was verily believed, her familiar spirit. "That they sucked-in the last breath of their expiring friends was surely a practice of no medical institution, but a loose opinion that the soul passed out that way, and a fondness of affection, from some Pythagorical foundation, that the spirit of one body passed into another which they wished might be their own."<sup>3</sup>

Emanuel Swedenborg, to whom, as will be shown,

<sup>1</sup> *Genesis* ii. 7.

<sup>2</sup> T. Whiffen, *N.W. Amazons*, p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Thomas Browne, "Hydriotaphia" (*Works*. Vol. iii., p. 130. 1907 edition).

the more recent developments of Spiritualism are traceable, elaborated a theory of breathing, the different modes of which he correlated with spirit-breathing. "Inward thoughts have inward breaths, and purer spiritual thoughts have spiritual breaths hardly mixed with material" . . . hence "the varying species of respiration produce for their subject divers introductions to the spiritual and angelic powers with whom the lungs *conspire*."<sup>1</sup> Long before his time the early Hindus had formulated a theory of connection between the physical and the psychical in breathing, the reduction in the frequency of which induced or aided meditative calm, and the fakirs and yogi ascetics of to-day regulate their breathing even to cultivation of its suspension so that the spirit may obtain mastery over the flesh. In line with this is a statement by Dr Hare, in his *Experimental Investigation of the Spirit Manifestations, demonstrating the Existence of Spirits and their Communion with Mortals*, that he was informed by the spirits that "they differ from one another in density and that they have a fluid circulating through an arterial and venous system which is subject to a respiratory process."<sup>2</sup>

The conception of the soul as ethereal is universal : herein do savages and spiritualists think as one. The only differences are in the degrees of tenuity of vaporousness. In Tongan belief the soul is the aeriform part of the body, related to it as the perfume to the flower ; the Greenlanders describe it as pale and soft, fleshless and boneless ; the Congo

<sup>1</sup> *Emanuel Swedenborg*, p. 78. By Dr J. J. Garth Wilkinson.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Mr F. Podmore's *Studies in Psychological Research*, p. 37.

negroes leave the hut of the dead unswept for a year, lest the dust should injure the delicate substance of the ghost; the German peasants avoid slamming a door lest a soul gets pinched in it; and both French and English rustics open a door or window that the departing soul may have free egress. The natives of Melanesia say that it is grey, like dust, vanishing as soon as looked at; the Caribs that it is subtle and thin, and the Nicaraguans that it is like the air passing in and out through the mouth and nostrils. Greeks, Romans, Hebrews and the early Fathers of the Church alike conceived of it as of thin, impalpable nature; in the Arabian romance of *Yokdhan* the hero discovers in one of the heart's cavities a bluish vapour, which was a man's soul. In *The Report on the Census on Hallucinations*, taken by the authority of the Society for Psychical Research, a "Mr P." affirms that as his boy lay dying, he saw a blue flame in the air. "It hovered above me," he says, "for a few seconds . . . a few minutes later the child died."<sup>1</sup>

"And the souls mounting up to God  
Went by her like thin flames,"

sings Rossetti in *The Blessed Damozel*. In his Third Book, wherein are marshalled more than twenty arguments against immortality, Lucretius says: "I have shown the soul to be fine and to be formed of minute bodies and made up of much smaller first beginnings than is the liquid of water or mist or smoke."<sup>2</sup> Hampole, in his *Ayenbite of Inwyte* (*i.e.* the again-biting of the inner wit, or the *Prick of*

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings*, August, 1894, p. 126.

<sup>2</sup> Book III. 425-428.



*Conscience*), a poem of the fourteenth century, speaks of the more intense suffering which the soul undergoes by reason of its delicate nature :

"The soul is more tendre and nesche (soft)  
Than the bodi that hath bones and fleysche." <sup>1</sup>

Montaigne cites a number of classic authors, on the "soule in generale," all of them conceiving that it is, as to the Chaldeans, "a vertue without any determinate forme."<sup>2</sup> Descartes can get no further : "What the soul itself was I either did not stay to consider, or, if I did, I imagined that it was something extremely rare and subtle, like mind or flame or ether, spread through my grosser parts."<sup>3</sup> ("Observing that the pineal gland is the only part of the brain that is single, Descartes was determined by this to make that gland the soul's habitation.")<sup>4</sup> "Men," says Hobbes, "could not fall upon any other conceipt but that the soule was of the same substance with that which appeareth in a Dream to one that sleepeth or in a Looking-glasse to one that is awake."<sup>5</sup>

In a wellnigh forgotten book, *The Unseen Universe or Physical Speculations on a Future State*, published anonymously in 1875, and afterwards acknowledged as the joint work of two eminent physicists, the late Professors Balfour Stewart and P. G. Tait, it was argued that while the effect of a portion of our mental activity is to leave a perma-

<sup>1</sup> Reprint in Early English Text Society. Ed. Dr R. Morris.

<sup>2</sup> *Essays*. Book II., chapter xii.

<sup>3</sup> *Meditationes de primâ Philosophiâ*. Vol. ii., p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Reid, *Philos. of the Intellectual Powers*. Vol. ii., chapter iv.,

p. 99.

<sup>5</sup> *Leviathan*. Part I., chapter xii., "Of Man."

nent record on the brain-cells, thus constituting "a material organ of memory," the effect of the remaining portion is to set up thought-waves across the ether and to construct by these means, in some part of the unseen universe, our spiritual body.<sup>1</sup> How the vibrations transmitted by the ethereal medium into that universe could be located so as to avoid collision between the vibrations emanating from each individual brain the authors did not make clear. Cast in the same primitive mould, their theory anticipated that of the Rev. Adin Ballou's subtle ethero-spiritual substance which he calls "spiricity,"<sup>2</sup> and, more definitely, Dr Ashburnam's theory that a train of thought is composed of globules which can be seen by clairvoyants streaming visibly from the brain.<sup>3</sup> Sergeant Cox, a master in the Spiritualistic Israel, was convinced that the substance of the soul "is vastly more refined than the thinnest gas or the vapour of a comet's tail"<sup>4</sup>; Sir Oliver Lodge approvingly quotes the late F. W. H. Myers' "surmise" that "personality has a kind of semi-bodily existence; a sort of ethereal, or, as some would say, spiritual body still in fact subsisting."<sup>5</sup> Again, in *Raymond*, "We change our state at death and enter a region of—what? Of ether, I think."<sup>6</sup> With the vagueness which infuses all deliverances on this

<sup>1</sup> "The motions which accompany thought must also affect the invisible order of things, while the forces which cause these motions are likewise derived from the same region, and thus it follows that thought conceived to affect the matter of another universe simultaneously with this may explain a future state."—*The Unseen Universe*, p. 199. (Fourth edition.)

<sup>2</sup> Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism*. Vol. i., p. 302.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. ii., p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. ii., p. 174.

<sup>5</sup> *Quarterly Review*, July, 1903, p. 226.

<sup>6</sup> p. 298.

## THE QUESTION

subject, Mr J. A. Hill says : " As to the nature of the after-life . . . some great differences there must be, for our shedding of the sensory organs must presumably bring about considerable change in the mode and context of our perceptions, and consequently no very clearly comprehensible descriptions can come through."<sup>1</sup> A medium whom Mr Hill consults " gets at the length of time that has elapsed since death partly by a direct impression or intuition, and partly by the solidity or thinness of the form."<sup>2</sup> Orthodoxy, not always in accord with Spiritualism, greets it in the person of the Rev. Professor Henslow, who, in his *Present-day Rationalism Critically Examined*, suggests that " ether is the basis of the soul," while an American writer, Mr Henry Frank, in his *Modern Light on Immortality*, asserts that " invisible bioplasm or vital substance exists in every minute portion of the body, and that could the body-shell be removed we should have a phosphorescent duplicate of ourselves." In all this we are as the farmer with his claret : we " don't seem to get no forrader."

The discarnate soul is not envisaged as amorphous; it is a replica of the body, appearing to believers in the " new revelation " in no " questionable shape." " Man's spirit," says Swedenborg, " is his mind, which lives after death in complete human form."<sup>3</sup> Complete or mutilated, in barbaric ideas, according to its having been unharmed or injured during its earthly career. The Australian natives cut off the

<sup>1</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1917, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> *Psychical Investigations*, p. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Tylor's *Primitive Culture*. Vol. i., p. 450.

thumb of a slain foe so that he cannot throw the shadow spear in the land of shadows. In Nicaraguan belief, when a man dies there comes out of his mouth something resembling a person. On Greek vases the soul is depicted as issuing from the mouth in the form of a homunculus, and that Christian art falls into line with this conception is seen in the frescoes on the walls of the Campo Santo at Pisa, where the soul is portrayed as a sexless child emerging from the mouth of a corpse. In an elaborately sculptured monument over the tomb of Bishop Giles de Bridport in the east transept of Salisbury Cathedral the soul is represented as a naked figure being carried by an angel to heaven.

Among the Nias Islanders of the Indian Archipelago souls are weighed out for those who are yet to be born : the child in the womb is asked by the god Balin if he will choose a heavy or light soul—that is, a long life or a short life, and a natural or a violent death. The maximum weight allotted is about ten grammes. Elsewhere, the soul is found to weigh a little more.<sup>1</sup> One Dr Duncan McDougall, of Boston, U.S.A. (all sensational discoveries honour America as their birthplace), reported, as the result of weighing several bodies at the very moment of death, having found that in each case there was a loss of weight of from half-an-ounce to an ounce. The very second of death was determined by the instant dropping of the opposite scale. This, with an ingenuity creditable to his imagination, but not to any sense of humour, he assumed represented the loss through the departure of the soul. He adds

<sup>1</sup> A. E. Crawley, *Idea of the Soul*, p. 122.

that there was always a loss of weight in human beings, but the result in each case when a dog's corpse was placed in scales balanced to a fraction of an ounce was that the weight remained exactly the same.<sup>1</sup> This seems to tell against the belief in the immortality of animals which is held by some spiritualists. But they can take comfort in the evidence—*quantum valeat*—adduced by Raymond Lodge's little Indian girl "control," Feda. Speaking through the medium, Mrs Leonard, she says: "He has brought that doggie again, nice doggie. A doggie that goes like this and twists about (Feda indicating a wriggle)." <sup>2</sup> Apparently accepting Dr Duncan McDougall's conclusions, Mr Edward Carpenter remarks that "it would be satisfactory to know how far modern observation of a normal soul-weight corresponds with ancient speculation in the matter." <sup>3</sup> His reference, of course, is to the ancient Egyptian idea of the weighing of the heart or soul after death in the Hall of the Two Goddesses of Truth before the deceased could enter the kingdom of Osiris. A reference to possible experiments on soul-weight in ancient Rome occurs in the Third Book of Lucretius: "So soon as the deep rest of death hath fallen upon a man, and the mind and life have departed, you can perceive then no diminution of the whole body either in appearance or weight: death makes all good save the vital sense and heat." <sup>4</sup> *Mutatis mutandis*; the doctrine of continuity

<sup>1</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 12th March 1907. The full report appears to be given in the *Annals of the American Society for Psychological Research*, June, 1907.

<sup>2</sup> *Raymond*, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> *Drama of Love and Death*, p. 185.

<sup>4</sup> Book III., 211-215.

applied to theories of a spirit-world is further "justified of its children." The unbroken connection between the old and the new animism has examples in fairydom and devildom. Concerning the former, we learn, on the authority of the Rev. Robert Kirk's *Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies*, published in 1691, that the fairies, as the philosophers tell us of matter, exist in various "states." Some are of the nature of "condensed cloud or of congealed air"; others have "bodies or vehicles spongy, thin and defecat," while the rest are of grosser texture. They "speak but little and that by way of whistling."<sup>1</sup> So with the denizens of ghostland in their squealing and twittering, both in Homer's underworld and the Hebrew sheol. In the *Iliad* it is told how "like a vapour the spirit was gone beneath the earth with a faint shriek."<sup>2</sup> "The souls of Penelope's Paramours conducted by Mercury chirped like bats, and those which followed Hercules made a noise, but like a flock of birds."<sup>3</sup> Isaiah writes of the "familiar spirit out of the ground whose speech shall whisper out of the dust."<sup>4</sup> When Calpurnia, Cæsar's wife, urges him not to leave the palace because of "horrid sights seen by the watch," she says :

"The graves have yawn'd and yielded up their dead.  
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets,"<sup>5</sup>

and in *Hamlet*, Horatio, referring to the murder of Cæsar, says :

<sup>1</sup> P. 6. 1893 (reprint in *Bibliothèque de Carabas*).

<sup>2</sup> Book XXIII., 100.

<sup>3</sup> Sir Thomas Browne, *Works*. Vol. iii., p. 132 (1907 edition).

<sup>4</sup> Chapter xxix. 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Julius Cæsar*, Act II., sc. 2.

"A little ere the mightiest Julius fell  
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead  
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman street."<sup>1</sup>

The Solomon Islanders compare the voice of the soul to a whisper; in the weird cries of the loris and the lemur the Malagasy natives hear the wailing of the *lemures*,<sup>2</sup> the unquiet spirits of their ancestors, and to the ears of the Algonquin Indians the shadow-souls of the dead chirped like crickets. In the case of the famous Epworth Rectory ghost, when the Rev. Samuel Wesley tried to get into conversation with it, he says that he received in response "only once or twice two or three very feeble squeaks, a little louder than the chirping of a bird." However, when the family prayers were offered up for the House of Hanover, the Jacobite poltergeist knocked loudly in protest!

The exponents of modern Spiritualism give no clear lead in the matter of demonology and witchcraft. There appears to be only occasional place in its scheme for Satan and his gang of demons who are alleged to possess the bodies of human beings and animals, notably among these latter, according to the sacred record, swine.<sup>3</sup> The existence of evil spirits is conveniently assumed by apologists as abetting mediums in frauds; "and no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."<sup>4</sup> (See *infra*, p. 182.) Certainly there is no place therein for witches, with their Sabbath orgies,

<sup>1</sup> Act I., sc. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Lat., *lemur* = a ghost, from their stealthy movements and plaintive cries.

<sup>3</sup> Luke viii. 32, 33.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 14.

black masses, nocturnal rides on broomsticks, and transformation of old crones into cats and hares. Yielding to "the form and pressure of the time," the places in the occult that knew them once know them no more. The house, empty, swept and garnished, is filled with seven other occupants, bearing other names.

Timely is the warning given by Professor Gilbert Murray that "the great thing to remember is that the mind of man cannot be enlightened permanently by merely teaching him to reject some particular set of superstitions. There is an infinite supply of other superstitions always at hand, and the mind that desires such things—that is, the mind that has not trained itself to the hard discipline of reasonableness and honesty—will, as soon as its devils are cast out, proceed to fill itself with their relations."<sup>1</sup>

The physical phenomena of earlier and, presumably, more ignorant times as to the nature and behaviour of the occult have given place in large degree to psychical phenomena; to the clairvoyants and to the trance-utterances of mediums. The quasi-physical, as we may perhaps define materialised spirit-forms, are now little, if at all, in evidence, nor does belief in the genuineness of the photographs of these diaphanous anæmics now obtain credence save from the very few who follow Mr Edward Carpenter in regarding that genuineness as "beyond question."<sup>2</sup> But, physical or psychical, "the trail of the serpent" is over it all.

<sup>1</sup> *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> *The Drama of Love and Death*, p. 186.





**PART II**  
**PHYSICAL PHENOMENA OF**  
**SPIRITUALISM**



## HISTORICAL

"Write me down in a book and send me the life and adventures, the tricks and frauds, of the impostor Alexander Abonoteichos."—

LUCIAN: "Alexander the Oracle Monger."

"Create a belief in the theory, and the facts will create themselves."—JOSEPH JASTROW: "Fact and Fable in Psychology."

THE phenomena of Modern Spiritualism are twofold: physical and psychical. They are more or less intermingled in the poltergeist<sup>1</sup> and clairvoyant, and in outlining the history of the movement the actions of the one cannot be understood without those of the other.

The following is a convenient classification.

### A. PHYSICAL

Raps, Table-turning, etc.

Examples, *Fox, Phelps*.

Levitation, etc.

Example, *Home*.

Slate-writing, etc.

Example, *Slade*.

Miscellaneous.

Examples, *Stainton Moses*,

*Eusapia Palladino*.

Materialisation of Spirits.

Photographs of Spirits.

Ghosts and Haunted Houses.

### B. PSYCHICAL

Trance States.

Example, *Swedenborg*.

Clairvoyancy.

Crystal-gazing.

Telepathy and Hallucinations.

Trance Mediums.

Examples, *Mrs Piper, Mrs*

*Leonard* (in *Raymond*).

Cross Correspondence.

Example, *Mrs Verrall*.

Theosophy.

Example, *Madame Blavatsky*.

Christian Science.

Example, *Mrs Eddy*.

<sup>1</sup> A noisy spirit. German *f.*, *polter*, noise, uproar; and *geist*, ghost.

Modern Spiritualism had its origin in a very humble way seventy years ago in America, land of "many inventions." A generation earlier the seed whence the movement sprang had been sporadically planted in the receptive soil from which Shakers and Universalists gathered a more fruitful crop than could be reaped in England: a soil which nourished Mormons, Second Adventists, Perfectionists of Oneida Creek, Brotherhoods of the New Life, and communities of the type of Brook Farm, with their dreams of a new heaven and a new earth. From the same generous soil sprang, in these later days, the Revivalists Moody and Sankey, the Prophet Dowie, and the Christian Scientist, Mrs Mary Baker Eddy. The Revivalists, after stirring up the emotions of their fellow-countrymen and leaving them to simmer, have periodically shown solicitude for the unconverted in this and other lands, striving to awaken sinners by rousing services blended of song and sensation, only, in many cases, to have begotten hysterical extravagances, making the last state of the "converted" worse than their first. It is also to America that spiritualists here are indebted for a ceaseless stream of mediums since the arrival of the first, a Mrs Hayden, in 1852. Boston remains the chief market of world-supply.

In a relatively new civilisation there is freedom from the trammels of conventions which repress the individual and which bar the intrusion of disturbing elements bringing new ideas in their train. And there is a mentality among the American people which makes them peculiarly responsive to whatever is novel and appeals to the imagination. This may

be less marked at the present time when so large an alien element is being infused, but it was active at the time when Spiritualism and allied movements "caught on."

In March, 1848, the household of a farmer named Fox, who with his wife and their two young daughters, Margaret and Katie, lived in a one-storied log-house at Hydeville, in the State of New York, was disturbed at night by knockings and like uncanny noises, the louder of which came from the girls' bed. Soon after, these were repeated, sound for sound, being answered by raps at certain letters in response to Katie Fox snapping her fingers. The letters, when taken down in writing, made up connected words and sentences. The father and mother, who were devout Methodists, believed that these messages were due to spirits. Neighbours were called in, one of whom, apparently an expert in the rapping-alphabet, learned from the answers that these came from the spirit of a pedlar who had been murdered in the house and buried in the cellar, which was then under water. The spirit went on to describe the murder in detail. The news spread: crowds of people were drawn to the spot, and, so goes the story as told later on, when the cellar was dry, diggings revealed, some feet down, a few teeth, bones and hair, all presumably human. Soon after this sensational discovery Margaret Fox went to Rochester, New York, to stay with her married sister, and Kate went on a visit to friends in Auburn, a town near by. In both places the raps went on more vigorously than at Hydeville; the married sister and the friends at Auburn became sharers in

spiritual gifts ; rappings were the order of the day, or, rather, of the night, since all the spirits "love darkness rather than light"<sup>1</sup>—to complete the quotation would be to anticipate. (Of Katie Fox Mr A. P. Sinnett says : "She was so remarkable a medium for the rapping manifestation that often when she entered the house where I was staying raps would flutter all over the house in broad daylight."<sup>2</sup>) A year later a correspondent of *The Spiritual World* estimated "that there were a hundred mediums in New York City, and fifty or sixty 'private circles' are reported in Philadelphia."<sup>3</sup> It was estimated that in seven years the number of believers in spiritualism in America had reached two millions, a number now largely exceeded.

Copying a custom of the Methodists, American spiritualists hold annually big "camp meetings," whither crowds flock from all parts. The chief resort is Lily Dale, where a large hotel is crammed, and the cottages are rented by mediums of all sorts : slate-writers, sealed-letter readers, spirit photographers, and a motley lot of "camp-followers" in the shape of astrologers, palmists and fortune-tellers.

It may here be well to explain what is meant by a spiritualist "circle."

First, "Picture to yourself a little chamber into which no very brilliant light was admitted, with a crowd of people from all quarters, excited, carefully

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> "Dr Crozier and Spiritualism." *Fortnightly Review*, May, 1917, p. 865.

<sup>3</sup> Podmore's *Modern Spiritualism*. Vol. i., p. 183.

worked-up, all a-flutter with expectation." These words are eighteen hundred years old; in them Lucian, immortal satirist, describes how the medium, Alexander of Abonoteichos, arranged the properties for a séance.

Writing under the disguise of "M.A.Oxon," a prominent medium, the late Rev. Stainton Moses, issued a leaflet of *Advice to Inquirers on the Conduct of Circles*, from which these instructions are quoted: "When you think the time has come, let someone take command of the circle and act as spokesman. Explain to the unseen Intelligence that an agreed code of signals is desirable and ask that a tilt may be given [*i.e.* to the table round which the circle sits "in subdued light"] as the alphabet is slowly repeated at the several letters which form the word that the Intelligence wishes to spell. It is convenient to use a single tilt for 'No,' three for 'Yes,' and two tilts to express doubt or uncertainty. [A most ancient code: see *infra*, p. 83.]

"After this, ask who the Intelligence purports to be, which of the company is the medium and such relevant questions.

"The signals may take the form of raps. If so, use the same code of signals and ask, as the raps become clear, that they may be made on the table, or in a part of the room where they are demonstrably not produced by any natural means, but avoid any vexatious imposition of restrictions on free communication. Let the Intelligence use its own means. It rests greatly with the sitters to make the manifestations elevating or frivolous and



even tricky." "M.A.Oxon" concludes with this counsel: "Try the results you get by the light of Reason. Do not enter into a very solemn investigation in a spirit of idle curiosity or frivolity. You will be repaid if you gain only a well-grounded conviction that there is a life after death."

Concerning the "subdued light," it is interesting to note that Reginald Scot, in the chapter on "Magical Circles" in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, published in 1584, says that "as for the places for these, they are to be chosen melancholy, doleful, dark and lonely . . . or else in some large parlour hung with black."<sup>1</sup>

The Hydeville story is the forerunner of a succession of records of mysterious phenomena of the poltergeist type, whose variety in detail warrants reference to some happenings in the household of a Presbyterian minister, Dr Phelps, of Stratford, Connecticut. In March, 1850, there began and continued for a year and a half a series of disturbances which showed a blend of sprite-like and transcendental elements in the spirits who were credited as the cause. There were visions of figures of angelic beauty, varied by high kicks of the furniture. According to the narrative supplied later on by persons who were not eye-witnesses, in one of the rooms eleven lovely women, with Bibles in front of them, were kneeling in seraphic joy, their fingers pointing to verses apparently relating to the strange occurrences. At another time the windows were smashed; objects were thrown by invisible hands; brickbats started from mirrors and fell on the floor;

<sup>1</sup> P. 472 (1886, reprint).

turnips covered with hieroglyphs grew out of the pattern under the carpet ; shovel and tongs moved to the middle of the parlour and waltzed ; the big table rose two feet in the air ; letters, written by no human hands, were wafted down, and from the viewless air a large potato dropped near the reverend master as he sat at breakfast. At dinner the spoons and forks flew up out of the dishes ; and a turnip followed the example of the potato. These pranks recall the old nursery rhyme :

“ Hey diddle-diddle, the cat and the fiddle ;  
The cow jumped over the moon ;  
The little dog laughed to see such sport,  
And the dish ran after the spoon.”

Nor were the children exempted from this horse-play. Invisible powers carried the elder boy across the room and cut his trousers into strips ; at another time a lamp on the mantelpiece in his bedroom moved from its place and set fire to some papers on his bed ; while his sleeping sister was nearly smothered by a pillow drawn over her face, and nearly strangled by a tape tied round her neck. As for the raps, they purported to come from a spirit who had been a lawyer's clerk, and who said that he was in hell because he had cheated Dr Phelps's wife in drawing up her marriage settlement !

The excitement created by the Stratford phenomena brought thither one Andrew Jackson Davis by name, son of a shoemaker, for not “ many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called ” to such great services. Three years before the Fox rappings he had exhibited

power as a clairvoyant and faith-healer. Fame came to him early because he had been singularly privileged by the spirits of Galen and Swedenborg appearing to him while in a trance, and instructing him concerning his beneficent mission to mankind. Davis gave as his judgment that vital electricity in the boy's organism accounted for the raps, and that the spirits controlled the movements causing the general disturbances. The hieroglyphs on the turnips he interpreted as this message from the spirit-world : " A high society of angels desire through the agency of another and a more inferior society to communicate in various ways to the earth's inhabitants." <sup>1</sup>

Returning to the circles : music, the sensuous, and low comedy contributed to their " variety " show. The medium whom raps from the Intelligence had made known was his chosen vehicle, acting under the essential condition of " subdued light," filled the air with perfumes, music was wafted from shut pianos, from concertinas held in one hand, and rung from bells unpulled. Flowers and fruits were strewn among the circle; and, less agreeable, if more satisfying, live eels and lobsters, pots of jam and rolls of lard, supplied a special menu. For further entertainment tables were turned or tilted, and other articles of furniture moved, either visibly or, more often, in the dark, or in such a way that only results were seen.

Shortly after her arrival in this country Mrs Hayden was followed by another medium, Mrs Roberts, and rappings and table-turnings became epidemic. For a minimum fee of half-a-guinea the

<sup>1</sup> Podmore: *Modern Spiritualism*. Vol. i., p. 197.

raps could be heard and the turning table felt. There was no lack of visitors to the séances. Later revelations made known the fate of the departed. As an example of this a Rev. Mr Gillson, of Bath, in a work entitled *Table-Talking: Disclosures of Satanic Wonders and Prophetic Signs*, reports that after ascertaining that his interlocutor was a departed spirit, who expected in the course of ten years to be bound with Satan and all his crew and cast into the abyss, catechised him as follows:—

“ I then asked : ‘ Where are Satan’s headquarters ? Are they in England ? ’ There was a slight movement.

“ ‘ Are they in France ? ’ A violent movement.

“ ‘ Are they in Spain ? ’ Similar agitation.

“ ‘ Are they in Rome ? ’ The table seemed literally frantic.”<sup>1</sup>

To turn to another and more important chapter in the book of the “ new revelation ” : 1855 brought to these shores a man famous in the annals of Spiritualism. “ In David Dunglas Home,” or Hume, Mr Podmore says, “ and in his doings, all the problems of Spiritualism are posed in their acutest form : with the marvels wrought by him or through him, the main defences of Spiritualism must stand or fall.”<sup>2</sup>

Home, of Scottish birth and name, was taken, in 1842, when he was nine years old, by relatives to America. In his seventeenth year—two years after the Hydeville knockings, about which he may have heard—he came out as a medium, finding support

<sup>1</sup> Podmore: *Modern Spiritualism*. Vol. ii., p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. ii., p. 222.

in that profession from a group of spiritualists. They subscribed money to send him to England to recruit his energies and also to advance the cause. His credentials secured him welcome both in spiritualist circles and the houses of prominent people. From England he went abroad, finally reaching Russia, where he exhibited his powers before the Tsar. He returned in the autumn of 1859, bringing with him a Russian lady of noble birth and moderate fortune, whom he had married. Three years afterwards she died; Home was left "hard up" and lived by his wits till 1866, when he made the acquaintance of Mrs Lyon, a widow lady, wealthy and childless. There was a singular charm about him, felt by all who met him, and it was this which won her heart and opened her purse strings. She voluntarily—at least he was not proved to have used undue influence upon her—gave him the handsome sum of £24,000, and promised more. In recognition of her generosity he double-barrelled his name as Home-Lyon. But soon afterwards the lady cooled and repented, and brought an action for restitution of the money, which she won, the court at the same time acquitting Home of what looked like unworthy behaviour. In 1871 he remarried, and again a Russian lady of fortune. After this he spent the greater part of each year on the Continent till his death in 1886. He is described as a man whose nerves were highly strung, lavish in love of his friends and of cheerful disposition, but vain to a degree, ever striving to be before the foot-lights. His skill as a pianist and his dramatic power as a reciter added to his social attractions. Trust in

him was deepened by the impression of his belief in himself as possessed of supernormal powers which he made on others, as well as by his orthodox attitude. In his trances he "habitually delivered discourses on religious themes and on communion with God and the angels." Mr Podmore says that Home was never publicly exposed as an impostor, and there is no evidence of any weight that he was ever privately detected in trickery.<sup>1</sup> But, as will be seen later on, he always chose his own company or imposed his own conditions. Such, in brief outline, was the man. Now for his performances.

After the stock phenomena of raps, tilting tables, music from apparently untouched accordions and guitars, spirit voices and spirit lights, all in the usual "dim," if not "religious, light," Home would open the second act. I borrow Mr Podmore's description :

"If the conditions were judged favourable to the higher manifestations, the lights would be turned out, the fire screened and the table drawn up to the window, the company sitting round three sides, leaving the side next the window vacant, with Home sitting at one end of the vacant space. Hands would then be seen, outlined against the faint light proceeding from the window, to rise over the vacant edge of the table, move about the paper lying on its surface or give flowers to the sitters. Afterwards the medium would be levitated."<sup>2</sup>

To Pope's question, "Shall gravitation cease if you go by?"<sup>3</sup> America had given an affirmative

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Spiritualism*. Vol. i., p. 230.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. i., p. 232.

<sup>3</sup> *Essay on Man*. Ep. IV. i. 128.

answer before Home levitated. In 1851 a medium named Gordon was carried through the air a distance of sixty feet, "entirely by spiritual hands." More famous in the annals of this phenomenon is the case of Mrs Guppy, a very heavy weight. At a séance at which, after recitation of the Lord's Prayer and sacred tunes from a musical box, the materialised spirit of Katie King appeared, one of the sitters said : " I wish she would bring Mrs Guppy here " ; whereupon a heavy bump on the table was heard, and on a match being lighted Mrs Guppy was seen standing on the table, holding a housekeeping book, in which the last written item was " onions." She had been transported from her house in Highbury, three miles away. Her companion at home had last seen her making up her accounts ; she suddenly disappeared, and the only trace she left was that of a slight haze near the ceiling. Her husband, with the coolness of the " well-conducted " Charlotte Werther,<sup>1</sup> remarked that no doubt she had been wafted away by the spirits and went to his supper. About the same time supernormal agencies carried " Dr " Monck, a professional medium, through the air from Bristol to Swindon. Later on, terrestrial agencies carried him to prison as a rogue and a vagabond.

To return to Home. The most graphic account of one of his earlier levitations was from the pen of Robert Bell, a prominent journalist of the time, and

<sup>1</sup> " Charlotte, having seen his body  
Borne before her on a shutter,  
Like a well-conducted person,  
Went on cutting bread and butter."

THACKERAY: *Sorrows of Werther*.

was published in *The Cornhill Magazine* of August, 1860. The article was entitled "Stranger than Fiction." To quote its essential parts : he describes the séance as taking place in a room in which all the lights had been put out, darkness being further ensured by the pulling down of the window blind by an invisible hand. The sitters felt their knees touched and their clothes pulled, also by invisible hands ; soft music was heard from an accordion, and presently Home, who " was seated next the window, his head being dimly visible against the curtain, said in a quiet voice, ' My chair is moving—I am off the ground—don't notice me—talk of something else,' or words to that effect. . . . I was sitting," Mr Bell adds, "nearly opposite to him and I saw his hands disappear from the table, and his head vanish into the deep shadow beyond. In a moment or two he spoke again. This time his voice was in the air above our heads. He had risen from his chair to a height of four or five feet from the ground. As he ascended higher he described his position, which at first was perpendicular, and afterwards became horizontal. . . . In a moment or two more he told us that he was going to pass across the window, against the grey silvery light of which he would be visible. We watched in profound silence, and saw his figure pass from one side of the window to the other, feet foremost, lying horizontally in the air. He spoke to us as he passed, and told us that he would return the reverse way and recross the window, which he did. . . . He hovered round the circle for several minutes and passed, this time perpendicularly, over our heads. I heard his voice



behind me in the air and felt something lightly brush my chair. It was his foot, which he gave us leave to touch. I placed my hand gently upon it, when he uttered a cry of pain, and the foot was withdrawn quickly, with a palpable shudder. He now passed over to the farthest extremity of the room, and we could judge by his voice of the altitude and distance he had attained. He had reached the ceiling, upon which he made a slight mark and soon afterwards descended and resumed his place at the table. An incident which occurred during this aerial passage, and imparted a strange solemnity, was that the accordion, which we supposed to be on the ground under the window close to us, played a strain of wild pathos in the air from the most distant corner of the room."

Attestation as to levitations of Home in the same year, and in 1868, 1871 and on other occasions, under conditions of wellnigh total darkness, in which the details, in the main, correspond with the above, were made by well-known men, among them Lord Lindsay, afterwards Earl of Crawford,<sup>1</sup> Viscount Adare, afterwards Earl of Dunraven, and, most notable of all, by the distinguished physicist, Mr (now Sir William) Crookes, who testified to two cases of levitation at which he was present. He says that at the second séance Home was seen to be sitting in the air, supported by nothing visible. Lord Lindsay—the only spectator of *this* phenomenon—testified to Home floating horizontally out of the

<sup>1</sup> He was subject to hallucinations of black dogs, figures of women and flames of fire on his knees, which, although the phenomena are wholly different, suggest caution in accepting his testimony to suspension of the law of gravitation.

room through a slightly opened window and returning feet foremost through another window.

The question asked by Jesus, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"<sup>1</sup> may have provoked Home and other mediums to attempt to achieve that elongation by other means. There is a group of witnesses who depone to having seen this accomplished, and, as an exception to the usual conditions imposed by mediums, in candle-light. Among other witnesses to this is Lord Lindsay, who in his evidence before the Dialectical Society averred that he saw Home, when in the trance state, elongated eleven inches. On awaking he resumed his natural height. The degree of elongation varied from three inches to one reported case of eighteen inches.

Perhaps the most impressive of the feats exhibited by Home, which has attestation from Sir William Crookes and other witnesses of integrity, is the fire ordeal. Sir William tells how Home pulled lumps of red-hot coal, one at a time, out of the fire with his right hand, then folded a handkerchief, and putting his left hand into the fire took out a red-hot cinder and put it on the handkerchief, which remained unburnt. Sir William tells us that on another occasion Home "took a good-sized piece of red-hot coal from the fire, put it in his right hand, and carried it with the other hand." Then "he blew the small furnace thus extemporised till the lump was nearly at white heat, and drew my attention to the lambent flame which was flickering over the coal and licking round his fingers. He fell on his knees,

<sup>1</sup> Matthew vi. 27.

looked up in a reverent manner, held up the coal and said: 'Is not God good? Are not His laws wonderful?'

A presumably less qualified authority, Mrs S. C. Hall, tells that she saw Home poke a large drawing-room fire, then draw from it with his hand a big lump of red-hot coal and after half-a-minute's pause put it on her husband's head. Asked, "Is it not hot?" he answered, "Warm, but not hot." Home drew Mr Hall's white hair over the coal, which glowed red beneath it, and after a lapse of four or five minutes removed the coal. Two or three present "attempted to touch it, but it burnt their fingers. I said, 'Daniel, bring it to me,' and he placed it in my left hand. I felt it warm, yet when I stooped down to examine it, my face felt the heat so much that I was obliged to withdraw it."<sup>1</sup>

The same Mr Hall, a well-known miscellaneous author, who died in 1889, relates that at a sitting with Home he saw the spirit of his dead sister. But the phenomenon of materialisation did not, apparently, play a large part in Home's séances. "It needs heaven-sent moments for this skill," and the spirits are coy. As laid down by an authority on the subject: "When strict conditions are imposed, even when united with harmony and good feeling, it is only in very rare instances that full-form manifestations take place."<sup>2</sup>

Next in prominence to Home among the American mediums who, at intervals, came to England, were the Davenport Brothers, whose credentials, assur-

<sup>1</sup> *Experiences in Spiritualism*, p. 178. By Lord Adare.

<sup>2</sup> *The Spiritualist*, 22nd December 1876.

ing them welcome, were strengthened by their being accompanied by a sort of chaplain, the Rev. J. B. Ferguson, a "somewhat weak-headed" but guileless man and a sincere believer in the supernatural character of the performances of the Brothers. He had been converted as the result of attending a séance where, by the use of the rapping-alphabet, he had been put into communication with a deceased brother minister. It is difficult to attach importance to the phenomena of levitation, elongation and fire ordeal as manifestations of the activity of departed spirits: the ordinary man would, *prima facie*, expect evidence less gross in character. And the remark applies to the phenomenon exhibited by the Davenport Brothers, which consisted in sitting in dark cabinets and extricating themselves from ropes, which in their apparently effectual securing were adduced as the work of invisible hands, and which therefore defied unaided human skill to undo. However, the spirits, as Cowper says of the Deity,

" Move in a mysterious way "  
Their " wonders to perform."

The Brothers arrived in 1864 and remained here for about a year, when they went to the Continent, staying there till 1868. Of this more hereafter.

Among other well-accredited American mediums the most notable, since the Davenport Brothers, was Henry Slade. "Doctor," he dubbed himself, as an exception in the country whose male inhabitants, according to the late "Max O'Rell," are "mostly colonels." He came here in the summer of 1876. He is described as being of tall, lithe figure, dreamy-

eyed, having a rather sad smile and a certain melancholy grace of manner, and as of highly wrought nervous temperament.<sup>1</sup> His special line as a medium was in the receipt of communications from spirits written on double slates screwed or locked together. His sitters put questions orally, or in writing on slates, sometimes concealing the questions on folded slips of paper. Unlike the phenomena already described, these were produced in full light. The company were free to bring their own slates, mark them for identification, fasten them up, lay them on the table, each one keeping his or her eyes steadfastly on the medium. Mr Podmore, whose sceptical attitude towards all spiritualistic phenomena never wavered during many years of investigation of them, was, he tells us, "profoundly impressed by the performance."<sup>2</sup> He was not alone. Eminent men of science witnessed the performances and, save in two notable instances, to be dealt with later on, confessed themselves baffled. So were professional conjurers, one of them confessing that he regarded it "as impossible to explain the occurrences by presditation of any kind."<sup>3</sup>

Circumstances to be narrated in the next chapter compelled Slade to leave England hurriedly in the following year. He left an expert successor in one William Eglinton, a fellow-countryman, and co-worker with Madame Blavatsky. The spirit-writing on slates which he exhibited brought a

<sup>1</sup> Lucian thus describes the medium Alexander of Abonoteichos: "His eyes were piercing and suggested inspiration, his voice at once sweet and sonorous." (Fowler's trans. Vol. ii., p. 213.)

<sup>2</sup> *Modern Spiritualism*. Vol. i., p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

crowd of witnesses testifying to the genuineness of these unique holographs, and the London Spiritualist Alliance set its hall-mark on them by inviting Eglinton to read a paper on the marvels. The following narrative is quoted as a typical example of his skill.

A Mr Smith, to whose exceptionally acute powers of observation Mr Podmore testified, and Mr J. Murray Templeton, had a sitting with Eglinton. Expressing the desire of the two to get something written which could be regarded as outside the knowledge of the three, Mr Smith took down a book haphazard from a shelf, put it on a chair and sat on it, while he and Mr Templeton were arranging the page, line and word to be asked for. This was decided by each taking some crayons and pencils by chance. One of them found that he had taken eighteen crayons, and the other that he had taken nine pencils. So they agreed that the "controls" should be asked to write the last word of line 18 on page 9 of the book. The book was produced and laid on one of the slates, both of which were held beneath the underneath of the table, the book being held firmly closed between the table and the slate. The three men talked, and in the midst of Mr Eglinton's remarks the writing was heard to begin. He talked for about half-a-minute; the writing continued a few more seconds before the usual three raps came to denote its conclusion. The message on the slate was as follows:—"This is a Hungarian book of poems. The last word of page 18 (page 9, line 18) is *bunhoseded*." After the trio had observed that a mistake in the figures had been corrected in

parenthesis, Mr Smith opened the book at page 9 and found that the last word on line 18 of that page was "bunhoseded." He regarded the test as crucial; "for," as he says, "it is difficult to believe that Mr Eglinton can have committed to memory the exact position of every word in every book on his shelves—containing some two hundred books—or more."<sup>1</sup> As told by Mr Templeton, the narrative differs. Were ever any two witnesses of the same occurrence in exact agreement? The test, he says, was proposed by Eglinton, the book was not chosen haphazard, and the page and line were fixed-on by taking the actual totals of the crayons and pencils.

This by no means exhausts the list of American mediums whom the dwellers in Wonderland received with open arms. *Ex uno disce omnes*, and to recite their names and achievements would be only to use "vain repetitions." These can give place to the story of the wonders exhibited by a renowned home-made medium.

I refer to the Rev. Stainton Moses, from whose directions for the conduct of circles quotations have been given. To him the late Dr Alfred Russel Wallace paid this tribute: "He was as remarkable a medium as D. D. Home, and during the last seventeen years of his life he kept accurate and systematic records of all the phenomena that occurred through his own psychic powers. He sat almost entirely with private friends, many of whom also kept notes of what occurred, and after a full examination of these independent records, Mr Myers concludes that the various phenomena, many of

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Spiritualism*. Vol. ii., pp. 211, 212.

which were of the most remarkable character, are thoroughly well established.”<sup>1</sup> More cautiously, Sir Oliver Lodge says that Stainton Moses “wrote automatically, *i.e.* subconsciously, and felt that he was in touch with helpful and informing intelligences.”<sup>2</sup>

Son of the headmaster of the Grammar School at Donington, in Lincolnshire, Stainton Moses was born in 1839. He went up to Oxford in 1858 and took Holy Orders in 1863, but indifferent health and a “parson’s throat” compelled him to give up clerical work in 1870, when he came to London as tutor to a son of his friends, Dr and Mrs Stanhope Speer. They were Spiritualists, converted to the faith by the belief that they had seen the face of a dead relative at a séance where a Mrs Holmes had acted as medium. Stainton Moses was a neurotic, therefore of highly susceptible temperament; and to this, fostered by sympathetic surroundings, and especially to the reading of books on spiritualism, notably R. Dale Owen’s *The Debateable Land*,<sup>3</sup> may be traced the development of his powers as a medium, manifest in both physical and psychical phenomena. His reputed high, wellnigh saintly,

<sup>1</sup> *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup> *Raymond*, p. 350, and see his *Survival of Man*, pp. 94, 104.

<sup>3</sup> This title is applicable to Mr Owen’s statement that when he was at Naples, where he was American Minister, Home gave a sitting in his (Mr Owen’s) house, when, three or four friends being present, a table and lamp weighing ninety-six pounds rose eight or ten inches from the floor and remained suspended in the air while one might count six or seven, the hands of all present being laid upon the table. This is cited by Dr A. R. Wallace as one of “a few instances in which the evidence of preterhuman or spiritual beings is as good and definite as it is possible for any evidence of any fact to be.”—*Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p. 71 (Revised Edition, 1896).



character, and his unblemished career as cleric and schoolmaster, begot unwavering trust. Like Home, he was never detected in any trickery. His mediumistic powers were revealed in 1872, when he became English master in University College School, a post which he held till 1889. He died in 1892 of a lingering disease, perhaps self-aggravated. Mr Podmore says that "at the end of his life, during a period of extreme nervous prostration, he became a victim, like many other mediums, to the drink habit."<sup>1</sup> He was no professional, he asked no fee nor expected one from the select number, often only two, of old friends who were invited to his sésances. In a room where light was wholly excluded rapping-alphabets were in full swing—at one séance they indicated the presence of forty-nine spirits; the miscellaneous objects introduced ranged from gloves and pin-cushions to opera-glasses and Parian statuettes. Sprayed scents diffused fragrance; sometimes the liquid perfume was poured into the upturned hands of the sitters, "frequently it would be found oozing from the medium's head and running down, like the precious ointment of Aaron, to his beard."<sup>2</sup> Confirming an entry in Mrs Speers' diary, Moses says that on one occasion he was levitated more than six feet. Dr and Mrs Speers averred that one evening

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Spiritualism*. Vol. ii., p. 288.

"There is certainly some evidence indicating that continual sittings for physical phenomena cause an illegitimate and excessive drain on the vitality of a medium, creating a nervous exhaustion which is apt to lead, in extreme cases, to mental derangement, or to an habitual resort to stimulants with a no less deplorable end."—*On the Threshold of the Unseen*, p. 261. By Sir W. F. Barrett.

<sup>2</sup> *Modern Spiritualism*. Vol. ii., p. 278.

a brilliant cross, its colours varying, appeared behind the medium's head,<sup>1</sup> from which time spirit lights were often seen, accompanied by spirit music. To Moses himself came not, as to his namesake on the Mount, "the glory of the Lord like devouring fire," but the voices of Swedenborg, Bishop Wilberforce and others departed, while nearly forty of the less famous among these sent messages proving their identity, through Imperator, the guiding "control"<sup>2</sup> who directed the medium's hand in spirit writing. These communications fill twenty-four notebooks, and contain not only autobiographical details, but homilies of the ordinary pulpit type, which can hardly be construed as forming part of any "new revelation." A quotation from one of them will serve as sample of the whole. Pitched in the triumphant note of "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee,"<sup>3</sup> it seems to herald the passing away of the old order and the advent of the new Spiritualism. "We tell you, friend, that the end draws nigh. It shall not be always so. As it was in the days which preceded the coming of the Son of Man; as it has

<sup>1</sup> In Home's case a crystal ball emitting flashes of coloured light appeared.

<sup>2</sup> Sir Oliver Lodge explains that "the control or second personality which speaks during the trance appears to be more closely in touch with what is popularly spoken of as 'the next world' than with customary human existence, and accordingly is able to get messages through from people deceased, transmitting them through the speech or writing of the medium, usually with some obscurity and misunderstanding, and with mannerisms belonging either to the medium or to the control."—*Raymond*, p. 87.

The controls, as will be seen, form a miscellaneous company, ranging from philosophers to charwomen.

<sup>3</sup> Isaiah lx. 1.

been in the midnight hours which precede every day dream from on high, so it is now. The night of ignorance is fast passing away. The shackles which priestcraft has hung around struggling souls shall be knocked off, and in place of fanatical folly and ignorant Pharisaism and misty speculation you shall have a reasonable religion and a divine faith. You shall have richer views of God, truer notions of your duty and destiny; you shall know that they whom you call dead are alive amongst you, living, as they lived on earth, only more really: ministering to you with undiminished love; animated in their unwearying intercourse with the same affection which they bore to you whilst they were yet incarnate." To this follow assurances on man's immortality. "Man never dies, cannot die, however he may wish it—in that great truth rests the key to the future."

In the year that Stainton Moses died interest gathered round a medium of different type, one Eusapia Palladino, an uneducated Neapolitan, to whom the late Dr A. R. Wallace bore witness as follows:—

She "had been tested by numbers of men of science—Italian, German and French—all of whom became satisfied of the genuineness of the manifestations. The sittings took place in private houses belonging to Professor Charles Richet, a French physician, who has made a special study of mental diseases and of hypnotism, and under test conditions usually under Professor Lodge's personal supervision. The phenomena consisted of the motion of various objects at considerable distances from the medium,

the appearance of hands and faces not those of any person present, musical sounds produced on an accordion and piano while no one was touching either instrument, a heavy table turned completely over while untouched by anyone, various parts of the Professor's body touched or grasped as by invisible hands while the medium's hands were securely held, and lights like glow-worms flitting about the room. His conclusion was that these various phenomena were not produced by the medium in any normal way, and that they were not explicable as the result of any known physical causes."<sup>1</sup>

The tests to which Eusapia was required to submit were numerous; they extend over nearly twenty years. They began in 1892 and were repeated in 1894, on the Ile Roubaud, near Hyères, when Professor Lodge vouched that the phenomena "were amply sufficient in themselves to establish a scientifically unrecognised truth." In 1895 Eusapia was brought to Cambridge, when, as will be told in the next chapter, doubts as to the genuineness of her manifestations were expressed, causing Professor Lodge materially to modify his previous judgment. In a letter dated 2nd November 1895, and printed in *Light*, he said: "Eusapia has shown that she employs artifice and deceives: so much is certain. She has just as certainly shown that she can cause genuine phenomena. That is my opinion." During the years 1905, 1906 and 1907 investigations into her mediumistic powers were carried on at forty-three sittings,

<sup>1</sup> *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p. 104.

some at Naples, some at Turin and the larger number at Paris, where M. and Madame Curie were members of the investigating body appointed by the Institute Général Psychologique. Following on this, a committee was appointed by the Society for Psychical Research in 1908, the sittings being held at Naples in the winter of that year. Finally, Eusapia went to America in November, 1909, and stayed there till June, 1910, during which period she gave between thirty and forty séances. These are described in detail by Mr Hereward Carrington—who attended the larger number—in his *Personal Experiences in Spiritualism*<sup>1</sup> (he had been present at the Naples séances).

It was remarked at the outset that the “new revelation,” following the processes of evolution (adapting itself, perchance, like an older revelation, to “the hardness of men’s hearts”), was gradual in the character of its manifestations. Some twelve years appear to have passed before the grosser physical phenomena at Hydeville and other places were followed by more ethereal phenomena in the materialised forms of the departed. This privilege was also first accorded to America.

The first record of that marvel dates from October, 1860. At a séance held by Robert Dale Owen, where Mrs Underhill (a married daughter of the Foxs) was the medium, a veiled and luminous female figure appeared and walked about the room. Later on Kate Fox (heroine of the Hydeville story) gave sittings to a disconsolate widower, a Mr Livermore, of New York, and was able to assuage his

<sup>1</sup> Part II. (T. Werner Laurie.)

grief by invoking a figure in whom he recognised his dead wife. But he was not permitted to approach her. By the powers of the same medium, materialised spirits outside family groups appeared. Among these was Benjamin Franklin. But it was not till January, 1872, that the proselytes "without the gate" had these celestial visions vouchsafed to them. Mrs Guppy, famous in the annals of levitation, was the first to achieve distinction among us in successfully "calling spirits from the vasty deep"—or height. At a séance at her house, where a sister medium was present, a face "white as alabaster" appeared at an upper opening in the cabinet: at a séance held by two mediums, Herne and Williams, three weeks later, the number of spirit-shapes grew apace. They were rendered visible in the semi-darkness by luminous smoke or vapour, accompanied by a faint smell of phosphorus—not sulphur! A similar smell was emitted at a séance given by the first Mrs Guppy some years earlier, and notably, on another occasion, when spirit lights appeared at a séance given by Mr Stainton Moses to his friends the Speers. Herne and Williams were eclipsed by other mediums, among them a Miss Showers, of Teignmouth, a girl of sixteen. At her séance the old and the new phenomena met together. Saucepans jumped off the fire, dish-covers leapt to the bell wires, ottomans and flower-pots flew about, and a table started running across the room. In the midst of this wantonness one of the company recognised the materialised spirit of the notorious John King (he was, when in the flesh, the buccaneer Morgan) and

of one Peter sitting on the sofa. This was accomplished through the mediumship of Ellen, the servant, to whom the considerate Peter prescribed, a good supper, wine included. This may be paralleled by the incident at a Maori séance, when the spirit of a deceased chief spoke through the priest medium, who was sitting in the darkest corner of the house. The spirit assured his "sister" that all was well with him, and added: "Give my large pig to the priest."<sup>1</sup> Among the Samoans "the priest generally managed to make the god say what he wished him to say, or to make demands for something which the priest himself wished to possess."<sup>2</sup>

An important witness now appears on the scene to dispel any doubts which had been felt by some as to whether the medium and the spirit are not one and the same person. At séances held at his own house in May, 1874, where a girl named Florence Cook, then in her sixteenth year, was the medium, Sir William (then Mr) Crookes, averred that he had seen the materialised spirit of Katie King, daughter of the above-named John King, of whom—*i.e.* of Katie—it was arranged that photographs should be taken. This is Sir William's testimony:

"I frequently drew the curtain on one side when Katie was standing near, and it was a common thing for the seven or eight of us to see Miss Cook and Katie at the same time under the full blaze of the electric light. We did not on these occasions

<sup>1</sup> Quoted from "Old New Zealand" in *Cock Lane and Common Sense*, p. 42. By Andrew Lang.

<sup>2</sup> *Melanesians and Polynesians*, p. 224. By George Brown, D.D.

actually see the face of the medium, because of the shawl, but we saw her hands and feet. [Miss Cook was lying on the floor, with her face muffled in a shawl.] We saw her move uneasily under the influence of the intense light and we heard her moan occasionally. I have one photograph of the two together, but Katie is seated in front of Miss Cook's head. At a later séance, held in Miss Cook's bedroom, which had been transformed into a dark cabinet, Sir William was privileged to be present behind the curtain at the farewell meeting between Miss Cook and Katie, and saw and heard the two figures conversing together for several minutes."<sup>1</sup> Such is the evidence given by that distinguished savant as to the temporary return of the departed from the realm of spirits.

In his *Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism* Sir William refers to the sensation of "a peculiar cold air, sometimes amounting to a decided wind" . . . a cold so intense that he could compare it only "to that felt when the hand has been within a few inches of frozen mercury,"<sup>2</sup> which frequently precedes the manifestation of the figures. Mr Edward Carpenter suggests that this may be due "in part at any rate to a condensation of water-vapour on the accreting particles of the spirit body."<sup>3</sup> The intimate connection in barbaric thought between wind and spirit was referred to in the introductory chapter. As the Maori of New Zealand heard in the wind the signs of the presence of their god, so does the spiritualist find proof of the

<sup>1</sup> *Modern Spiritualism*. Vol. ii., p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> P. 86.

<sup>3</sup> *Drama of Love and Death*, p. 203.



presence of the departed in the "decided wind" to which Sir William testifies.

Speaking of spirit photographs, Dr Wallace expresses his satisfaction "that whatever marvels occur in America can be reproduced here," and he cites examples of "clearly recognisable likeness of deceased friends having been obtained."<sup>1</sup> Among those possessing exceptional interest is that of the late William Howitt's "two sons, many years dead, the likenesses to whom were instantly recognised by the parents as 'perfect and unmistakable.'" The interest for spiritualists lies in the light which that photograph throws on the debatable question whether the spirits remain at the stage of development when they depart, or, as in the case of babies dying immediately after their birth, of non-development.

As bearing on this, at an exhibition of spirit photographs at the Spiritualists' Hall, Chiswick, in the spring of 1904, Mr Blackall "stated that his subjects are able to give sittings for any period of their earthly existence, just as when our thoughts can now run over the past periods of our lives." Among the spirits photographed as peering over Mr Blackall's shoulder were those of Browning, Tennyson, Longfellow, Charles Dickens, Huxley, Darwin and Napoleon. It was regrettable to hear him add that only one photographer in England was able to take the portraits and that "he has now retired from business." "The exhibition," says the reporter of the interview with Mr Blackall, "is unique."<sup>2</sup> None of us can contradict that.

<sup>1</sup> *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Chronicle*, 19th March 1904.

Speaking of the "photography of the cloud figures (some of them very definite in outline) which are found to emanate on occasions from mediums in the state of trance," Mr Edward Carpenter says : "Notwithstanding the doubt which has commonly been cast on all such photographs, and notwithstanding the very obvious ease with which cameras *can* be manipulated and shadow figures of some kind fraudulently produced, the evidence for the genuineness of some such 'spirit' photographs is—to anyone who really studies it—beyond question. . . . The evidence is so abundant and, on the whole, so well confirmed that we are practically now compelled to admit (and this is the point in hand) that cloud-like forms of human outline emanating from a medium or other person's body may at times be caught by the photographic plate. . . . That these forms, occurring and occasionally photographed in connection with mediums, are 'independent spirits' or souls, is, of course, in no way assured. They may be such or (what seems more likely) they may be simply extensions of the spiritual or inner body of the medium."<sup>1</sup> In his little book on *Psychical Research* Sir W. F. Barrett makes no reference to the matter. Sir Oliver Lodge leaves it an open question, but his leanings are obvious. "The question of photography applied to visible phantasms, and to an invisible variety [can any rational explanation of these words be supplied ?] said to be perceived by clairvoyants, is still an open one—at any rate no photographic evidence has yet appeared conclusive to me. If successful, photography could

<sup>1</sup> *Drama of Love and Death*, pp. 186, 187.

prove that the impression was not only a mental one, but that the ether of space had been definitely affected in a certain way also, so that the impression had probably become received by the optical apparatus of the eye, and had been transmitted in the usual way to the brain.”<sup>1</sup> On a later page this elusive writer, whose confusion of thought is manifest in the obscurity of his language, says: “The fact that a photograph can be clearly recognised when the medium has only seen the person clairvoyantly, on the other side of the veil, is suggestive, since it seems to show that the general appearance is preserved—or, in other words, that each human body is a true representation of personality.”<sup>2</sup>

At this time of day it may seem as the sending of “owls to Athens” to discourse to intelligent readers on Apparitions and Haunted Houses. But when, as in Sir W. F. Barrett’s *Psychical Research*, cases of apparition are discussed as having “high evidential value”<sup>3</sup>; when they are referred to in Sir Oliver Lodge’s *Survival of Man* as possibly not “purely subjective, belonging to what are sometimes spoken of as incipient materialisation”<sup>4</sup>; and when Dr Alfred Russel Wallace devotes a long chapter of his *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism* to prove their objectivity; discussion of the subject here has warrant.

Professor Davenport says that “there is in the average man a great slumbering mass of fear that he

<sup>1</sup> *Survival of Man*, p. 77 (1915 edition).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.      <sup>3</sup> P. 120.      <sup>4</sup> P. 83.

cannot shake off, made up of instincts and feelings inherited from a long human and animal past.”<sup>1</sup> The animal, the child and the ignorant, and therefore the superstitious, alike tremble before the unknown and the unusual; they fear, but know not what they fear. Ignorance is the mother of mystery, and the mysterious remains the dreaded. “Fear, in sooth,” says Lucretius, “takes such a hold of all mortals, because they see so many operations go on in earth and heaven, the courses of which they can in no way understand.”<sup>2</sup> This has supplement in Hobbes’ *Leviathan*: “This feare of things invisible is the naturall Seed of that which every one in himself calleth Religion; and in them that worship, or feare the Power otherwise than they do, Superstition.”<sup>3</sup>

Hence the mental state of both the savage and the illiterate is one of nervous instability. “A gust of contrarie wind, the croaking of a flight of Ravens, the false pace of a Horse, the casual flight of an Eagle, a dreame, a sodain voice, a false sign, are enough to overthrow, sufficient to overwhelm and able to pull him to the ground.”<sup>4</sup> The flimsiest report of the appearance of a ghost anywhere will draw thousands to the spot; presumably intelligent persons will write to the newspapers asserting their belief in the existence of these troublers of households. When rumours of a haunted house in Ballachin were spread abroad a few years ago, the Society for Psychical Research deemed them of

<sup>1</sup> *Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals*, p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> *De Rerum Natura*. Book I. 151-154.

<sup>3</sup> Part I., chapter xi. “Of Man.”

<sup>4</sup> *Essays*. By Montaigne. Book II., chapter xii. (Florio’s trans.)

sufficient importance to make investigations on the spot, and a correspondent who slept in the house wrote thus to *The Times*: "Of one thing I am certain—that is, that there is something supernatural in the noises and things that I heard and experienced there."<sup>1</sup>

At a reputed haunted house in Oxfordshire, all the inmates avoided a room whence issued at night "weird music, now sweet and soft and lovely as a dream, then swelling into weird confusion, and then dying away in long-drawn moans of infinite distress." When a carpenter at last was sent for he found a perfect plexus of bell wires underneath the floor of the haunted chamber. "When doors and windows were all closed, and everything was still at night, the wind, finding its way in by what channel it could, turned this labyrinth of wires into an æolian harp, whence issued the mysterious sounds by which successive families had been scared."<sup>2</sup>

Some time back (I omitted to note the date) it was stated in a paper called *Health* that above one thousand houses in London are tenantless because they are believed to be haunted. Imitating the precision of the Dublin lawyer who, challenging his opponent to a duel, and fixing the meeting in Phoenix Park, added, "in the Fifteen Acres, be the same more or less," I may say that the exact number of houses in the area ruled by the London County Council is given in its last "Statistical Report (1911)" as 606,271. This provides, as nearly as can be, one ghost to every six hundred

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, 8th and 10th June, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 25th August 1897.

dwellings ; and, as that supply doubtless exceeds the demand, it is not well to hamper the result by adding the number of skeletons producible from the cupboards of the 606,271 houses.

More than three centuries ago Reginald Scot, bravely and perilously attacking superstitions in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, asked in triumphant tones : “ Where are the soules that swarmed in times past ? Where are the spirits ? Who heareth their noises ? Who seeth their visions ? . . . Where be the spirits that wandered to have buriall for their bodies ? ”<sup>1</sup>

Where, indeed ? Why, everywhere, in the belief of psychists, as well as of peasants, some of the psychists even contending when a medium is exposed that, despite the detection of the sorry trickery, there is a residuum of phenomena which points to the action of supernatural agents. *Credat Judæus Apella, non ego.*

The list is a long one, stretching far back. Numberless bells have been rung ; mountains of crockery smashed ; cartloads of missiles hurled ; hundreds upon hundreds of people frightened out of their wits, and thousands upon thousands cheated of their sleep, through the assumed activities of the crowd of semi-incarnates. The literature of the subject, whether treated seriously or to entertain, is enormous. Certain stories stand out from the rest, as, for example, that of the Drummer of Tedworth, who came with a “ blooming noisome smell,” used the rapping-alphabet, banged on his big drum and terrorised Mr Mompesson and his children in revenge of his arrest and sentence to transportation. More

<sup>1</sup> P. 390, in 1886 reprint of 1584 edition.

famous than he is the ghost of "Old Jeffery," who harried the Wesley household at Epworth with "groans, squeaks, tinglings and knockings," and who was not to be scared away by the Reverend Samuel Wesley's purchase of a mastiff. Later in arrival was the Cock Lane Ghost, whose story, as a type of others of its kind, bears telling in more detail.

The materials for our knowledge of this legend are: 1. A pamphlet entitled *The Mystery Revealed: Containing a Series of Transactions and Authentic Testimonials respecting the supposed Cock Lane Ghost*, the authorship of which has been attributed to Goldsmith. As to this the British Museum Catalogue is silent. 2. *The Annual Register*, pp. 142-146. 3. *The Gentleman's Magazine*, XXXII., pp. 44, 81, 82. Each of these is of the year 1762. There is also in the British Museum Catalogue an entry: "*Cock Lane Humbug*, a Song. London, 1762. A slip fol."

Briefly told, this is the story. In 1756 Mr Kent, a Norfolk man, lost his wife, and her sister Fanny came to him as housekeeper. Like Matthew Arnold's typical Nonconformist, he had "an eye on his deceased wife's sister," and she returned the glance. Mrs Kent had died in child-bed, but as the baby lived, although only for a few minutes after its birth, the canon law, according to the author of *The Mystery Revealed*, forbade the marriage of the widower with his sister-in-law. From her he fled to London, but there she followed him, first by letters and then in person, the result being that "they thought it, *in foro conscientiae*, no crime to indulge their mutual passion." After one or two shifts they

settled in lodgings in Cock Lane, in the house of one Parsons, clerk of St Sepulchre's, Holborn. Kent, having to go into the country, left Fanny alone, whereupon she asked Parsons's daughter Elizabeth to sleep with her. At night strange scratchings and rappings broke Fanny's rest, the more so as she interpreted these as monitions of her death. Of these we hear no more after Kent's return. After a time, as the result of a squabble between lodger and landlord over money lent to the latter, Kent removed to Bartlet's Court, Clerkenwell, where, in February, 1760, Fanny, being then with child, died of small-pox and was buried in the vault of St John's Church. During 1761 and the earlier part of 1762 the noises that had disturbed poor Fanny's sleep were renewed in Parsons's house. They seemed to come from Elizabeth Parsons's bed, the girl herself being "always affected with tremblings and shiverings at the coming and going of the ghost," and feeling "the spirit like a mouse upon her back." The ghost itself appeared to some as a "shrouded, headless figure." The report of the apparition spread like wildfire through the town and brought crowds to Cock Lane.

Under date of 29th January 1762 Horace Walpole writes to Sir Horace Mann: "We are again dipped into an egregious scene of folly. The reigning fashion is a ghost—a ghost that would not pass muster in the paltriest convent in the Apennines. It only knocks and scratches; does not pretend to appear or speak. The clergy give it their benediction, and all the world, whether believers or infidels, go to hear it. I, in which number you may



guess, go to-morrow, for it is as much the mode to visit the ghost as the Prince of Mecklenburg, who is just arrived.”<sup>1</sup>

The result of Walpole's visit is told in a letter to George Montagu within four days after that to Mann: “I could send you volumes on the ghost. . . . A drunken parish clerk set it on foot out of revenge; the Methodists have adopted it, and the whole town of London think of nothing else. . . . I went to hear it, for it is not an *apparition*, but an *audition*. The Duke of York, Lady Northumberland, Lady Mary Coke, Lord Hertford and I, all in one hackney coach. It rained torrents, yet the lane was full of mob, and the house so full we couldn't get in. At last they discovered it was the Duke of York, and the company squeezed themselves into one another's pockets to make room for us. The house, which is borrowed, and to which the ghost has adjourned, is wretchedly small and miserable; when we opened the chamber, in which were fifty people, with no light but one tallow candle at the end, we tumbled over the bed of the child to whom the ghost comes, and whom they are murdering by inches in such insufferable heat and stench. At the top of the room are ropes to dry clothes. I asked if we were to have rope-dancing between the acts. We had nothing. They told us, as they would at a puppet show, that it would not come that night till seven in the morning—that is, when there are only 'prentices and old women. We stayed, however, till half-an-hour after one. The Methodists have promised them contributions;

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*. Vol. iii., p. 479 (Toynbee's edition).

provisions are sent in like forage, and all the taverns and ale-houses in the neighbourhood make fortunes. The most diverting part is to hear people wondering *when it will be found out*—as if there was anything to find out; as if the actors would make their noises when they can be discovered. However, as this pantomime cannot last much longer, I hope Lady Fanny Shirley will set up a ghost of her own at Twickenham, and then you shall hear one.”<sup>1</sup>

A Mr Brown and Mary Frazer, the girl's nurse, asked the ghost to answer questions in the way approved by ghosts generally—namely, one knock for “Yes” and two knocks for “No”—the result being that the spirit, who was none other than Fanny herself, declared that Kent had “poisoned her by putting arsenic in purl<sup>2</sup> and administering it to her when ill of the small-pox.” The spirit properly added that she hoped to see Kent hanged. The medium, as she would be called nowadays, was taken to other houses, with varying result; and at last a movement towards strict investigation of the phenomena was set on foot, Parsons reluctantly consenting to the girl's removal to the house of the Rev. Mr Aldrich, a clergyman of Clerkenwell, where there assembled “many gentlemen eminent for their rank and character,” among them being Dr Johnson.

The girl was put to bed by some ladies; all avenues against fraud or collusion were blocked; the company watched her for above an hour and nothing happened. Then the men went downstairs,

<sup>1</sup> *Letters*. Vol. iii., pp. 381, 382.

<sup>2</sup> Malt liquor medicated with wormwood or aromatic herbs.

but soon after were summoned by the ladies, who reported that the scratchings and rappings had begun. The girl was then bidden to put her hands outside the bed, when the noises ceased. The verdict thus far arrived at is set down, presumably by Dr Johnson, in *The Gentleman's Magazine*. After reciting the occurrence, he says: "It is, therefore, the opinion of the whole assembly that the child has some art of making or counterfeiting a particular noise, and that there is no agency of any higher cause." To this there is appended, probably by "Sylvanus Urban," the following note, printed in italics :—

"This account was drawn up by a gentleman of veracity and learning, and therefore we have thought it sufficient, though the imposture has been since more clearly detected even to demonstration" (XXXII., p. 81).

There had been a fruitless visit to the vault of St John's, because the spirit of Fanny had promised to rap on her coffin, and the next day the girl Parsons was threatened with committal to Newgate if, under the checks imposed, the noises were not resumed. Thereupon she hid a board about six inches long "under her stays," and so produced the noises; but both she and the company assembled agreed that "these had not the least likeness to the former noises." Denying trickery, she was "searched, and caught in the lie." But there was "concurrent opinion that the child had been frightened by threats into this attempt," so that the mystery of the original scratchings and rappings remained unsolved. In the sequel Parsons and

some accomplices were tried at the Guildhall for, as Horace Walpole hints in the letter already quoted, "conspiring against the life and character of Mr Kent in making the girl the medium of the slander that he had poisoned Fanny." Parsons was sentenced, to stand in the pillory three times and then to two years' imprisonment; his wife to one year's imprisonment; while the others escaped by paying a fine of between £500 and £600 to Mr Kent. Elizabeth Parsons, dupe or minx, or perhaps a mixture of both, vanishes into space.

Sixteen years afterwards a profligate parson, Cornelius Ford, a cousin of Dr Johnson's, died at the Hummums Hotel (Arabic *hammam*=hot bath), Covent Garden. A waiter there, who was absent at the time, and not having heard of Ford's death, going down to the cellar on his return, met him, not once only, but afterwards. He reported this to his master, and asked him what business Ford had there, when he was told of his death. The shock brought on a fever. On his recovery he said that he had a message from Ford to deliver to some women, but he was not to tell what it was or to whom it was given. He walked out and was followed, but somewhere about St Paul's the trackers lost him. He came back and said that he had delivered the message. The effect of this was to frighten the hotel servants. When Johnson heard the story he said: "The man had a fever, and this vision may have been the beginning of it."<sup>1</sup> This was a shrewd comment from a man who was no sceptic, to be

<sup>1</sup> Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. Vol. iii., p. 349 (Birkbeck Hill's edition).

paralleled by the following passage from Bishop Burnet's "Autobiography" (appended to Miss H. C. Foxcraft's *Supplement to Burnet's History of My Own Time*):

"The Countess of Belcarras, with whom I had lived in great friendship for many years, sent for me to come to her in all haste. When I came she told me her daughter had fits of a strange nature, in which she lay waking, but knew nobody; she spoke all the while like one in heaven, as if she had been conversing with God and the holy angels. . . . She was then about eighteen, and was an extraordinary person in all respects. I apprehended there was something belonging to her sex in the case, so I advised her mother to send for a physician. He set nature right, and she had no more fits. I had heard of other instances of this sort, but never knew any besides this; in it I saw how nuns, by their state of life, might be subject to such fits, so stories of that sort among them are not all to be rejected as fictions, nor to be entertained as things supernatural" (p. 474).

Given a healthy condition of mind and body, there is no room for phantasms of either the living or the dead. The causes which beget them are explained and their doom is certain.

Gradually there is being brought about the inclusion, within the realm of unbroken order, of the great mass of phenomena once regarded as due to supernatural causes, both good and baleful. What yet remains without is there because of the strength of prejudice and ignorance, or because the evidence for its incorporation is incomplete. As to the ultimate issue there can be no doubt. The disunion which human misconception has assumed, giving us nature and supernature, will vanish when the full light of knowledge is cast upon it. For the kingdom of superstition is the kingdom of darkness.

As Dowlas, the farrier in *Silas Marner*, says: "If ghos'es want me to believe in 'em, let 'em leave off skulking i' the dark and i' lone places—let 'em come where's there's company and candles."

Thirty years ago, upon reviewing Myers, Gurney and Podmore's *Phantasms of the Living* in *The Pall Mall Gazette*, Mr G. Bernard Shaw wrote: "It is useless to mince matters in dealing with ghost stories—the existence of a liar is more probable than the existence of a ghost." Upon reading this, my wife said that it recalled to her memory a case of wilful self-deception which came within her experience when she was a student at a horticultural college. This is her story: "The rear of the building had originally formed part of a Queen Anne mansion, and the additions to it were of a character irregular enough to supply shelter to any lurking ghost; hence there was the usual legend of a grey lady said to be the spirit of a murdered nun, which haunted the house, and sometimes swept along the corridors. The story gathered credence from the superstitious because the college house-keeper said that she had heard taps and footsteps.

"The need to be up betimes to work in the garden led to a rule that the students must be in their rooms not later than 10 P.M. However, one night I stayed reading in a fellow-student's room till twelve-thirty. To get to my room I had to pass one occupied by a senior member of the staff. I had got barely three yards past it when the door was opened suddenly and the occupant looked out, so I put on the pace to reach my room. I expected trouble the next morning, a summons and

reprimand, but nothing happened. Then I heard that the lady had had a terrible fright in the night: she had seen the ghost! So I went to her at once to disabuse her mind, telling her that I was the ghost, but instead of censure for thus frightening her, my explanation was received with scorn, and I was dismissed with the remark: 'Well, if it *was* you last night, you can't account for my experience on other nights when you did not pass my door.' "

## II

### EXPLANATORY

“When men have once acquiesced in untrue opinions and registered them as authentic records in their minds, it is no less impossible to speak intelligently to such men as to write legibly on a paper already scribbled over.”—HOBBS: *Leviathan*.

**I**T was shown at the outset that the soul-idea has remained fundamentally the same through every stage of culture. And there is equally cogent evidence that in their conceptions of the behaviour of discarnate spirits the savage and the spiritualist are one. It cannot be otherwise.

“Vain questions ! from the first  
Put, and no answer found.  
He binds us with the chain  
Wherewith himself is bound.  
From west to east the earth  
Unrolls her primal curve ;  
The sun himself were vexed  
Did she one furlong swerve ;  
The myriad years have whirled her hither,  
But tell not of the whence or whither.”<sup>1</sup>

The spiritualist affirms that the quest is not in vain ; that certain groups of phenomena give us assurance of the whither. The physical and the psychical in these phenomena remain mixed : some of the more repellent features appear only sporadically,

<sup>1</sup> F. T. Palgrave: *The Reign of Law*.



others, such as raps and table-tilting, are still credentials of the "new revelation." One has to "possess the soul in patience" in the effort to take seriously the stories of the Puck-like antics and dare-devilry of poltergeists when these are claimed to be part of the evidence of a spiritual world. In his *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, published in 1584, Reginald Scot tells in his day of the "jocund and facetious spirits who sport themselves in the night by tumbling and fooling with Servants and Shepherds in Country Houses, pinching them black and blue."<sup>1</sup> Among the Chukchee tribes of Siberia "sometimes the spirits are very mischievous. In the movable tents of the Reindeer people an invisible hand will sometimes turn everything upside down and throw different objects about."<sup>2</sup>

The table played an important part in the Raymond communications. It tilted as the letter of the alphabet is spoken by the medium, stopping when a right letter is reached and tilting three times to indicate "Yes" and once to indicate "No." Its wonderful properties are thus gravely vouched for by Sir Oliver Lodge. "For the time it is animated—somewhat perhaps as a violin or piano is animated by a skilled musician and schooled to his will—and the dramatic action thus attained is *very remarkable*. [The italics are mine.] It can exhibit hesitation; it can exhibit certainty; it can seek for information; it can convey it; it can apparently ponder before giving a reply; it can welcome a new-comer; it can indicate joy or sorrow,

<sup>1</sup>P. 510 (1886, reprint).

<sup>2</sup>~~The~~ *original Siberia*, p. 232. By M. A. Czaplicka.

